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KNICKS GO DOMINATES GRADE III LUKAS CLASSIC; BREEDERS' CUP NEXT

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021) – Korea Racing Authority's trailblazer **Knicks Go**, the top-rated horse for this year's Breeders' Cup Classic (Grade I), went right to the front and never looked back as he easily dismissed his five rivals to win Saturday's \$337,000 Lukas Classic (GIII) at Churchill Downs by four lengths over **Independence Hall**.

Knicks Go, ridden by **Joel Rosario** and trained by Louisville's Eclipse Award-winner **Brad Cox**, stopped the teletimer in 1:47.85 – a stakes record for the eighth running of the race and only .57 off **Victory's Gallop's** 1999 track record of 1:47.28.

"We're excited to get this race under our belt," Cox said. "He's a fast horse and he's dangerous when he gets to show that speed around two turns. Joel gave him an easy trip on the front end. He seemed like he was able to take a breather and open back up around the turn. On to the Breeders' Cup."

Sent to post as the red-hot 1-9 favorite, Knicks Go broke alertly from post position No. 2 in the field of six older horses and dictated the terms throughout. He had a half-length advantage over West Virginia Governor's (GIII) winner **Sprawl** into the first turn with Pegasus World Cup (GI) third **Independence Hall** also chasing, but then Knicks Go deliberately kicked a length clear down the backstretch with the first quarter mile in a modest :23.53 and the half in :47.27.

Knicks Go displayed his world-class superiority on the far turn, breaking the chasers' hearts after six furlongs in 1:10.90 with **Independence Hall**, **Sprawl** and comebacking \$3.7 million-earner **Tacitus** under a full drive. Knicks Go had a two-length jump on his inferior rivals at the top of the stretch as **Independence Hall** attempted to close the gap from the rail, but it was futile. Knicks Go's class was undeniable and he drew clear in the final furlong without much urging from Rosario.

"It's Knicks 'All Systems' Go to the Breeders' Cup!" track announcer **Travis Stone** said at the finish.

Overall, Knicks Go has won nine of 23 starts with three seconds and one third. The \$184,140 first prize boosted his career earnings to \$5,553,135.

"I kept him off the rail today a little bit but he was going very easy," Rosario said. "He's a really fast horse and he did what he needed to do. He's always been an impressive horse to ride and always been quick. Today he did things very easily and now on to bigger things."

This was Knicks Go's fourth stakes win in six starts this year. His year started with a 2 3/4-length victory in the \$3 million Pegasus World Cup (GI) at Gulfstream Park. After back-to-back fourth place finishes in the \$20 million Saudi Cup (GI) and \$1 million Metropolitan Handicap (GI), the 5-year-old bounced back with a 10 1/4-length win in the \$300,000 Prairie Meadows Cornhusker (GIII) and followed that with a dominating 4 1/2-length score in the \$1 million Whitney (GI) at Saratoga.

His next target is the \$6 million Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) on Nov. 6 at Del Mar.

Knicks Go returned \$2.20, \$2.10 and \$2.10. **Independence Hall**, ridden by **Javier Castellano**, earned \$79,400 for second and paid \$3.40 and \$2.60 as the 10-1 third betting choice. It was another 1 1/2 lengths back to **Shared Sense** in third under **Brian Hernandez Jr.** who paid \$3.40 to show.

Tacitus lost a head photo for third and was followed by **Chess Chief** and **Spawl**.

Knicks Go, a gray or roan son of Paynter out of the Outflanker mare Kosmo's Buddy, was bred in Maryland by **Angie Moore**.

The Lukas Classic honors the iconic 86-year-old Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**. The four-time winner of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks and conditioner of 26 Eclipse Award-winning champions has been based at Churchill Downs' Barn 44 since 1989. He was on hand to present the trophy.

PLAINSMAN BEATS BEAU LIAM IN GRADE III, \$300,000 ACK ACK

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021) – Shortleaf Stable's **Plainsman** rallied from off the pace, grabbed the lead with a furlong to run and out-kicked 1-2 favorite **Beau Liam** to the wire to win Saturday's 29th renewal of the \$300,000 Ack Ack (Grade III) at Churchill Downs by one length.

Plainsman, a 6-year-old son of Flatter, ran one mile on a fast track in 1:33.85, which was just .07 off **Pants On Fire's** 2013 stakes record (1:33.78) and .59 off **Fruit Ludd's** 2014 track record (1:33.26).

Joel Rosario rode the winner for trainer **Brad Cox**, who swept the Saturday stakes at Churchill Downs. Two races earlier, Knicks Go won the Lukas Classic (GIII).

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For Rosario it was his fifth win on the day, which marked the 72nd time a jockey has accomplished that feat and the first since **Florent Geroux** won five races from nine mounts on Sept. 4, 2020. Rosario's nine mounts earned a hefty \$603,170 on the day.

Atoka, with **Mr Dumas** in tow, led the field of nine older horses down the backstretch in the one-turn mile through fractions of :22.65, :45.21 and 1:09.15 with Plainsman sitting off the pace and in clear.

Leaving the turn after a three-wide move, Plainsman was in fifth behind the leaders and ducked inside to split Mr Dumas on the rail and Atoka on his outside. He grabbed the lead with an eighth of a mile to run and turned back favored Beau Liam, who made his stakes debut after winning his first three starts.

"I was able to sit a good trip for most of the race," Rosario said. "I knew turning for home I'd have a decision to make whether to keep him inside or go out. I knew I had a lot of horse underneath me and the race developed well for him."

The first prize was \$178,800 and hiked Plainsman's bankroll to \$729,207 with a record of 8-6-3 from 25 starts. It was his fourth career stakes win. Previously he won the 2018 Discovery (GIII) at age 3 and prevailed in the \$50,000 Jim Rasmussen at Prairie Meadows and \$85,000 Michael G. Schaefer Memorial at Indiana Grand earlier this year.

"This horse has been in great form this year," Cox said. "I think two-turns is probably his best distance but today he was able to sit a good trip from off the pace at the one-turn mile. He showed a lot of adversity today and ran a good effort."

Six of the last eight Ack Ack winners – **Pants On Fire** (2013), **Tapiture** (2015), **Tom's Ready** (2016), **Awesome Slew** (2017), **Seeking the Soul** (2018) and **Mr. Money** (2020) – used the race as a springboard to the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, which is scheduled for Nov. 6 at Del Mar with a \$1 million purse. Cox non-comital to Plainsman's next start.

Plainsman paid \$13.60, \$3.80 and \$3.20 at odds of 5-1. Beau Liam, ridden by **Brian Hernandez Jr.**, paid \$2.60 and \$2.40. Atoka was another 2 ¾ lengths back in third under **Rafael Bejarano** and paid \$8 to show.

Rushie, **South Bend**, Mr Dumas, **Guest Suite**, **Exculpatory** and **Mo Mosa** completed the order of finish. Ebben and Aloha West were scratched.

Plainsman, out of the Street Sense mare S S Pinafore, was bred in Kentucky by **Joseph Minor**.

The race is named in honor of **Cain Hoy Stable's** 1971 Horse of the Year **Ack Ack**, who is enshrined in the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. In his only Churchill Downs appearance, Ack Ack won the 1969 Derby Trial in 1:34.40 which was a track record for one mile that has since been eclipsed.

MANDATORY CLOSING PAYOUT OF \$78,530 DERBY CITY 6 ON SUNDAY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021) – A lucrative total Derby City 6 carryover pool of \$78,530 awaits bettors Sunday for closing day of Churchill Downs' 12-day September Meet.

Because Sunday is closing day, there is a mandatory Derby City 6 payout with all monies distributed to ticket holders with the most winners in the six-race series. Sunday's Derby City 6, which only costs 20 cents per combination, is scheduled to cover Races 5-10 starting at approximately 2:45 p.m. (all times Eastern).

Takeout on the Derby City 6 is just 15 percent, which is one of the lowest multi-race wager takeout rates in American racing.

Fans can wager on the Derby City 6 on track at Churchill Downs; www.TwinSpires.com, the track's official online wagering platform; other online wagering outlets; and select satellite betting centers throughout North America.

The first of 10 races Sunday is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern).

There also is a \$4,442 carryover in the \$1 Super Hi-5 Race 10 finale, which also must be paid out.

LUKAS CLASSIC QUOTES

Joel Rosario, jockey of KNICKS GO (winner): "I kept him off the rail today a little bit but he was going very easy. He's a really fast horse and he did what he needed to do. He's always been an impressive horse to ride and always been quick. Today he did things very easily and now on to bigger things."

Brad Cox, trainer of KNICKS GO (winner): "We're excited to get this race under our belt. He's a fast horse and he's dangerous when he gets to show that speed around two turns. Joel gave him an easy trip on the front end. He seemed like he was able to take a breather and open back up around the turn. On to the Breeders' Cup."

Javier Castellano, jockey of INDEPENDENCE HALL (runner-up): "The trip today worked out well. I was able to get to the inside and save ground. I was following Knicks Go and he ran a really good race. At the top of the lane he kept grinding and showing me more."

ACK ACK QUOTES

Joel Rosario, jockey of PLAINSMAN (winner): “I was able to sit a good trip for most of the race. I knew turning for home I’d have a decision to make whether to keep him inside or go out. I knew I had a lot of horse underneath me and the race developed well for him.”

Brad Cox, trainer of PLAINSMAN (winner): “This horse has been in great form this year. I think two-turns is probably his best distance but today he was able to sit a good trip from off the pace at the one-turn mile. He showed a lot of adversity today and ran a good effort.”

Sebastian Nicholl, assistant trainer of ATOKA (third): “I thought he ran a great race. The trip probably wasn’t his best but we’re really proud of the race he ran.”

ABOUT CHURCHILL DOWNS RACETRACK

Churchill Downs Racetrack (“CDRT”), the world’s most legendary racetrack, has been the home of The Kentucky Derby, the longest continually held annual sporting event in the United States, since 1875. Located in Louisville, CDRT features a series of themed race days during Derby Week, including the Kentucky Oaks, and conducts Thoroughbred horse racing during three race meets in the Spring, September, and the Fall. CDRT is located on 175 acres and has a one-mile dirt track, a 7/8-mile turf track, a stabling area, and provides seating for approximately 60,000 guests. The saddling paddock and the stable area has barns sufficient to accommodate 1,400 horses and a 114-room dormitory for backstretch personnel. CDRT also has a year-round simulcast wagering facility. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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